Writing the Five-Year Preservation Long-Range Plan for the LSTA Preservation Assessment Grant

Once a preservation consultant has performed an assessment of your institution and collections and provided you with a report based on their findings, you are required to create and submit a five-year Preservation Long-Range Plan to the MBLC. The preservation consultant’s report based on the assessment is not a plan in itself nor is the final grant report. The report will have many recommendations, and we do not expect you to implement all of them. It is up to your institution to decide which recommendations are a) feasible for your institution to implement and b) supportive of your institution’s mission.

Begin your preservation long-range plan with a brief overview of your institution. This should include background about the history of the institution, the institution’s mission, the population it serves, and the collections it houses. Solidifying this information will help you to select and prioritize the preservation consultant’s recommendations. Helen Alton’s article “Long-Range Preservation Planning” ¹ provides some useful considerations:

- “It is not logical to spend money to conserve pieces that lack historic, aesthetic or other values for your collection.” This could be rephrased as “It is not logical to devote resources to collections that are not a priority in terms of the institution’s mission.” Identify which materials and collections are most relevant to your institution’s mission. The preservation assessment recommendations are meant to be comprehensive. Some recommendations may sound as if they would be excellent to implement but would be taking resources away from other recommendations that would be more relevant to supporting the operation of your institution. It would be unwise to invest money in conserving one rarely-used object of little interest when that money could be spent on improving something such as environmental conditions and therefore having a greater effect on a larger number of objects that are much more frequently used.

- “Implementing the [preservation] plan can be difficult. Easy to accomplish, inexpensive changes that benefit the greatest number of items are the best place to start... In other words, a number of small steps will gradually improve the overall care of your collection.”² An example would be implementing a policy of keeping shades drawn to reduce light exposure. This would be an inexpensive way to start reducing light exposure. At a later date you could purchase new filtering shades.

To analyze actions in terms of priority and feasibility, we suggest using the Implementation Priorities grid created by Pamela Darling. How to create and use the grid is explained in the NEDCC Preservation Leaflet “Considerations for Prioritizing,” which is available online.³

After assigning priorities to the preservation assessment recommendations, write the body of the preservation plan. This will categorize and organize actions so that they can be accomplished and measured.

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2 Ibid.
The body of the preservation plan should be structured featuring goals, objectives, and activities with a timeline. Goals are broad declarations of improvements that you want to see. They are abstract statements and whether they have been achieved is difficult to measure. Goals are best expressed in statements written in the infinitive, such as “To improve security in the reading room.” Specific aspects of the goals that can be measured and evaluated as complete are objectives. To judge whether security has been improved in the reading room, it is necessary to define what marks an improvement in security. The actions necessary for the completion of objectives are activities. Such actions could include implementing a registration policy for users and having a staff member present in the reading room to supervisor readers.

The next part of the preservation plan is to create a timeline. Set deadlines for the achievement of activities and for the evaluation of objectives. In the example that follows, Activity 2.3.A could be implemented immediately, while Activity 1.3.B. and Activity 1.3.C. could be accomplished next year. Deadlines may be listed next to goals and objectives in the body of the plan, but there should also be a chart that organizes tasks chronologically.

It will be useful to organize the body of the preservation plan by themes or categories. Each category can have multiple goals grouped underneath it. The following list of possible categories is adapted from Sherelyn Ogden’s Preservation Planning: Guidelines for Writing a Long-Range Plan:

- Environment
- Storage: Facilities and Conditions
- Security and Access
- Housekeeping
- Policies and Practices (i.e., collections policy, disaster plan)
- Funding
- Staff, Consultant, and Training
- Exhibits (May not be applicable to your institution.)
- Conservation treatments (May not be applicable to your institution – preservation assessment reports stress improvement of environmental conditions before conservation treatments of individual objects.)

Conclude your preservation long range plan with a list of preservation actions to date. Remember that the preservation plan needs to be revisited and reevaluated periodically to assess its usefulness and success. It will also need to be updated as facts and situations change.

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Example of the Body of a Preservation Plan

This is an abbreviated example. Note how actions with the broadest impact are given high priority. In this
example, a rehousing project is planned for FY 2017-2017, since the projects of FY 2017-2017 focus on
improving widespread environmental conditions.

**Security**

**Goal 1:** To improve security in the archives reading room.

**Objective 1.1:** Implement security procedures concerning researchers.

*Activity 1.1.a:* Require researchers to present I.D. and sign in before requesting materials. Keep a record of what materials were requested. Create a retention schedule for sign-in sheets. (FY 2017)

*Activity 1.1.b:* Require that all researchers leave bags and coats at the research desk before requesting materials. Require that researchers have only loose sheets of paper and pencils for notetaking. (FY 2017)

*Activity 1.1.d:* Inform staff of new security policies and communicate their importance. (FY 2017)

**Objective 1.2:** Install electronic security devices for archives reading room.

*Activity 1.2.a:* Research security system options. Determine funding and resources required. (FY2017)

*Activity 1.2.b:* Install security system in archives and train staff in its use. (FY2017)

**Storage: Facilities and Containers**

**Goal 2:** To improve storage conditions of the archival collections.

**Objective 2.1:** Stabilize temperature and humidity in the archives storage area.

*Activity 2.1.a:* Research types of environmental monitoring equipment. (FY 2016)

*Activity 2.1.b:* Approach budget committee for funds and purchase approval. (FY2017)

*Activity 2.1.c:* Assign responsibility for environmental monitoring to a staff member and monitor environment for next year. (FY2017-FY2018)

*Activity 2.1.d:* Pending outcome of Activity 2.1.c and Activity 3.1.a., work with building manager and HVAC technicians to tweak and adjust HVAC system.

*Activity 2.1.e.*: Pending outcome of previous activities, evaluate need for installing a separate HVAC system in the archives storage room. [Note: This would be an excellent point at which to reevaluate and revise the plan.]

**Objective 2.2.:** Reduce light exposure in archives storage area.

*Activity 2.2.a:* Implement policy of keeping shades drawn in storage area. (FY 2016)

*Activity 2.2.b:* Research types of filtering shades and UV-filtering sleeves and sources of funding. (FY2016)

*Activity 2.2.c:* Research types of light bulb filters. (FY2016)
Activity 2.2.d: Purchase light-filtering shades and UV-filtering sleeves for fluorescent tubes (FY2017)

Objective 1.3: Rehouse material stored in acidic containers.

Activity 2.2.a: Determine types and number of archival containers needed, consulting the preservation assessment report. Research types and costs of archival storage containers. (FY 2016)

Activity 2.2.b: Approach budget committee for funds and purchase approval. (FY 2017)

Activity 2.3.c: Find an intern, work-study student, or volunteer from a local archives program to assist with rehousing. (FY 2017)

Goal 3: To improve environmental conditions in the building.

Objective 3.1: Work with building manager and custodians to improve conditions in the library.

Activity 3.1.a: Director will arrange meeting with building manager to discuss importance of maintaining stable environmental conditions. (FY2017)

Objective 3.2: Begin creating awareness of the need for a new library building.

Activity 3.2.a: Director will begin discussions of a new library building at 2017 trustees meetings. (FY 2017)